

NSC BRIEFING

2 December 1958

DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

- I. In Indonesia, the army apparently plans slowly increasing penetration of government as means of takeover rather than coup.**
 - A. Army chief Nasution intends to assign increased number of officers to key executive, legislative and diplomatic posts.**
 - B. Army hopes to steer Indonesia down middle path between Communism on left and Moslem extremism on right.**
 - C. Army already has broad powers under martial law and representation in cabinet and other government posts.**
- II. Communists have already warned of "dangers" inherent in growing army influence.**
 - A. Their theme apparently will be that this is contrary to Sukarno's "guided democracy" program, which they had expected to capture, and they will attempt to arouse public resentment.**
- III. As always in Indonesia, outcome of developing situation rests largely in hands of Sukarno.**

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Approved For Release 2004/03/17 : CIA-RDP79R00890A001000080012-5

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I. In Thailand, Marshal Sarit and his subordinates in ruling military group have not yet produced provisional constitution or interim cabinet and are ruling by fiat.

A. Reports of friction in military clique persist.

1. Dissatisfaction with Sarit's one-man rule, personal jealousies and ambitions are main sources of factionalism.

B. Sarit's rapidly declining health, now additionally strained by burdens of office [redacted] may be encouraging subordinates to lay plans for future power.

1. Of many possible contenders for top role, Generals Prapat and Punnaka seem men to watch.

II. Thailand's diplomatic dispute with Cambodia temporarily overshadows domestic political troubles.

A. Cambodia, charging press slanders and border incidents, abruptly withdrew ambassador from Bangkok. [redacted]

B. Thailand followed suit, has now adopted uncompromising attitude.

C. Some Thai military leaders urging Sarit take punitive action; in present sabre-rattling atmosphere, border incidents possible.

D. Cambodia may turn to Communist China for support, as it did last summer in squabble with South Vietnam.

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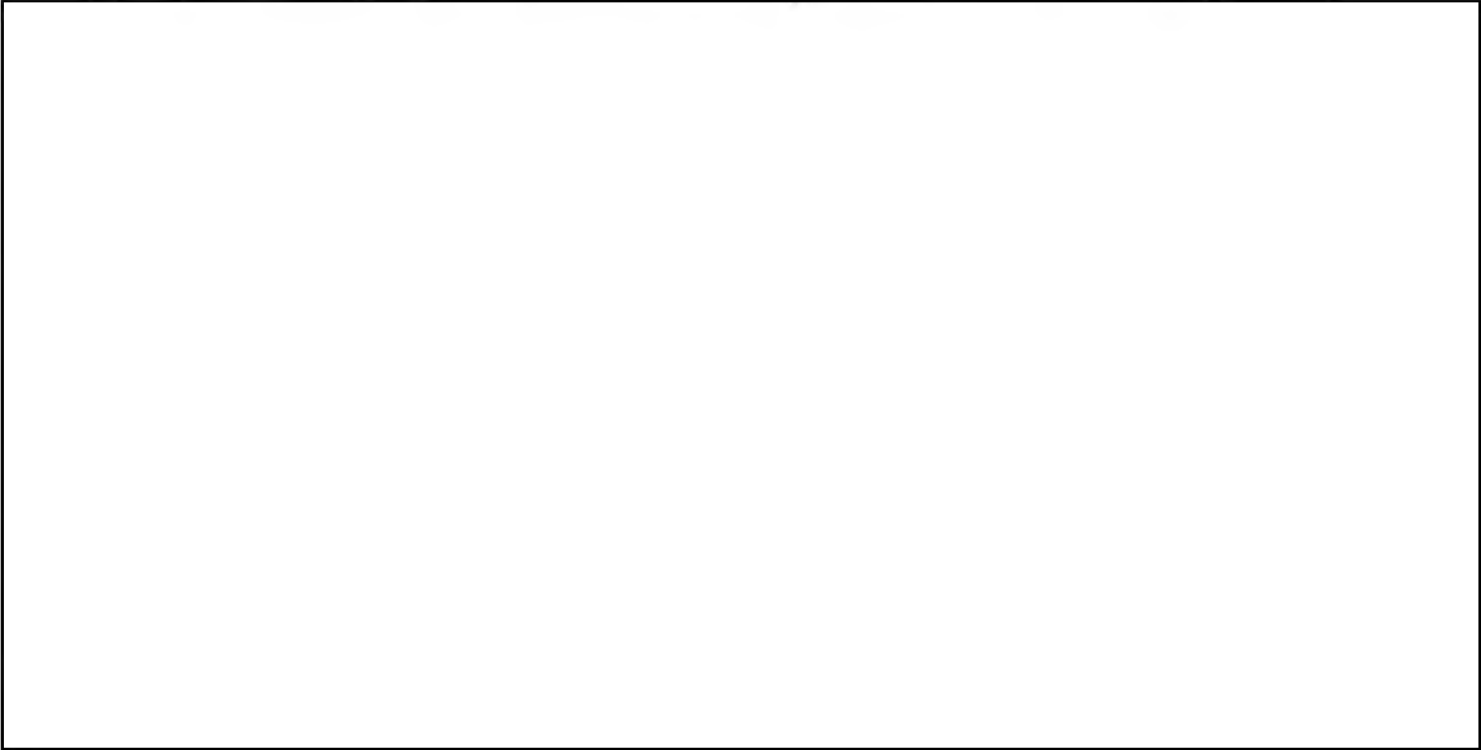
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Handwritten note:
Sarit Show
Ambassador before
Embassy

- I. **Forced retirement of Philippine Chief of Staff Arellano by 1 January and the reported imminent relief of intelligence chief Albert foreshadows further replacements of other top military officials, possibly including Defense Secretary Vargas.**
 - A. **These officers have been attacked as coup plotters by politicians close to Garcia. The politicians presumably bent on making armed forces a political instrument favoring their interests.**
 - B. **After retirement, accused officers may launch political counterattacks against Garcia administration.**
- II. **Circulating among politicians close to Garcia are rumors of official American involvement in alleged military plotting could indicate eventual efforts to blame US for political-military tensions.**
 - A. **The Philippines is already displaying stubbornly nationalistic attitude in current diplomatic talks on American bases and in its request for increased military aid.**

I. In Laos, parliamentary government seems to be falling apart.



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